

\$2.7m earmarked to promote May polls

By Amy Choi

PUBLICITY campaigns worth \$2.7 million have been approved for the May 5 Urban and Regional council elections for which nominations will be accepted from Monday.

The funds are included in \$12.6 million, approved by the Finance Committee yesterday, to be used to promote voter participation in the Legislative Council and municipal council elections.

A sum of \$330,000 will go to advertising agencies for creative plans, said the Principal Assistant Secretary of the Constitutional Affairs Branch, Francis Ho, in the Finance Committee yesterday.

The Secretary for Constitutional Affairs, Michael Suen Ming-yeung, said the campaigns would be part of the Government's strategy to encourage public participation.

"One of our strategies is to make people aware of the difference between the functions of municipal councils and district



■ Michael Suen ... participation bid.

boards," he said. Urban councils and regional councils are statutory and financially autonomous bodies which provide a variety of public health, cultural and leisure services, he said.

Mr Suen predicted that voter turnout on for the May election would be better than the 1989 municipal council elections, judging from last Sunday's district board elections.

Contributive factors

like voting on Sunday and organised electioneering activities by political groups would be present for the next round of municipal council elections, he said.

"If we take these into account, I'm reasonably hopeful that we can look forward for a better prospect of higher voter turnout in municipal councils elections in May," he said.

"So people are beginning to see the importance of choosing their own representatives at various levels of government."

Mr Suen said he hoped to build up a momentum which would peak in the September's Legislative Council elections.

However, he said the definition of a "successful" election could not be judged purely on a numerical basis.

"The main thing is that people of Hongkong realise that it is important for them to participate in this process," he said.